

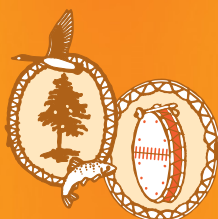
Nation

Volume 22, No. 25 • October 16, 2015

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VOTE



OPEN LETTER

The Importance of the First Nation Vote

The federal election is coming upon us very soon. There are many ridings across the country where the indigenous vote can have a major bearing on the outcome of the election. If that happens we will then have a voice in the Parliament of Canada and a voice in decisions, which affect indigenous people.

That is why I promote the idea of voting in elections. We can make a difference in a way that will benefit our communities and people. The right to vote for indigenous people in Canada was only acknowledged in 1960. Quebec was the last province to grant these rights to indigenous people in 1969. It was not a gift. Our leaders at the time fought long and hard to have this right recognized. They waged this fight knowing that eventually our people would be in a position to affect the outcome of elections and that we would have strong voices to speak on our behalf in the Parliament of Canada.

The battles that our leaders fought were similar to the battles fought by people like Martin Luther King in America and Nelson Mandela in South Africa. They dedicated their lives so that their people could have their voices heard in the highest political forums of the land—and to do so by voting. We should honour and respect these efforts and do our part.

Consider registering to vote and let us together make history.

To register, go to www.election.ca and follow the steps, or simply ask your Band Office for a letter of confirmation of residence and ask where to vote on Monday, October 19.

Dr. Matthew Coon Come

Grand Chief, Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee

My vote

by Will Nicholls

I know voting is by secret ballot but there's no law about sharing one's choice, which I'm about to do for this election. In Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou I will be voting for Romeo Saganash, the current MP and candidate for the New Democratic Party.

I like most of the NDP platform and the way they have acted on both sides of the James Bay territory. On the west side, NDP MP Charlie Angus championed First Nations concerns from schooling to assistance for natural disasters, sub-standard housing and much more. As MP, Saganash has done the same for Eeyou Istchee and the rest of his riding.

It is not to say the other parties' candidates haven't stepped forward on Aboriginal issues, concerns and such. In power, the Conservatives negotiated a new relationship agreement with the Cree Nation. However, I do not agree with the First Nations Financial Transparency Act and others of that ilk pushed through without consulting First Nations. The Liberals have been okay and indifferent as well in the past.

For me it comes down to one thing, Saganash is one of our own. He understands the north and all of the residents who live there. He is a First Nations person who has lived both on and off the Cree communities. He is well known by all peoples and respects them all.

Having a First Nations person as our Member of Parliament is as important as seeing President Obama elected in the United States. It adds a different dimension to the parliamentary mix that is needed.

Having an Aboriginal MP elected has been a godsend to First Nations in the

past. It is simply explaining what is meant when a First Nations negotiator says something. Different cultures and backgrounds do not always give the same meaning to words. Self-government, for example, even among the



Romeo Saganash, NDP MP for Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou

many First Nations across Canada does not mean the same thing.

Finally, it was 1968 before any Cree person was even allowed to vote in Quebec. Now we are the swing vote in any election on our territory. If we come out and vote we decide who best represents us. It's taken over 40 years to have a Cree Member of Parliament. I want a Cree to represent Eeyou Istchee. Our land, our people, our destiny and a Cree to keep an eye on what Ottawa plans for our future.

photo by Matt Jiggins

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Changing colours

by Joshua Iserhoff



I am currently writing this column from Attwell Coffee in Mississauga, Ontario.

I don't know how many happy Eeyou faces I've seen online with their trophy moose. Some selfies with their beasts made me chuckle – especially the one of my friend, Deputy Oujé-Bougoumou Chief Lance Cooper, posing with his moose in his Louis Vuitton bullet/knife bag. I always say, "Live large, you only live once!"

I haven't shot my bull yet but I trust that the Creator will provide one just so I can replace the usual turkey with a thick moose filet mignon. I am much more thankful about where my Thanksgiving supper came from. Either way, I'll still have my cranberry jelly sauce. What's a Thanksgiving supper without the red stuff and jogging pants after supper?

We all have our guilty comfort pants. I have only one and that's encouraging enough. I can't indulge too much in that eating department as your boy Josh may marry soon! I don't want an uninvited double chin gracing at the altar. That's just me though. When that happens you will be the first to know.

I've got to say that October makes me more appreciative of colour. I have fun with my attire as well. I know Stan Wesley is with me on this one. If you ever have the chance to drive through Mont-Tremblant during this time you'll know why I say you'll be appreciative! Seeing the glory of all shades (even in Eeyou Istchee) makes you thankful that you've made it to another season. At

least I do! Another season for great scarves and much layering, right cousin Beth?

It's hockey season once again and I will be cheering for the Habs again this year, just because of Carey Price and because he's "our" kind. We stick with each other, right? On the other hand, mother will cheer for her beloved Boston team and mother-in-law (to be) is with the Senators. I think it's a good balance for the family.

I am sure that hockey enthusiasts will bombard their team across their FB pages. That's perfectly fine. The good thing about it is that you may un-follow those who offend you; you know, the pesky annoying ones.

However, if you're a "Ghaline" (according to my friend, Candy Gunner, who was told by an anonymous tipster, "Ghaline" is a nosey and gossipy woman) then, you'll follow anyone and anything. "Don't be a Ghaline soundtrack," Candy writes. "Let everyone enjoy Facebook."

As Candy says: "We all have a little bit of Ghaline in us." I think she's right. Thanks Candy for the dreadful truth. "Just don't go Ghalining too much."

Much love from Mississauga and I'll be seeing you around Eeyou Istchee when the snow falls. In the meantime, I'll be sporting my Habs jersey up and down Yonge Street. I'll be bold and I think I should bulk up first though. Catch you all later, I've got to take on the road for Mistissini and Nemaska and get my bull. I have faith.

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Protect the forest

Waswanipi and Greenpeace launch Broadback petition

by Joshua Grant

Waswanipi and Greenpeace are launching an online petition to gather international support against further logging of the Broadback River Valley, the last untouched region in the community's territory.

The two worked together to create the website www.savethebroadback.ca, which hosts a video filmed inside the community that urges the Quebec government to prevent any further encroachment by the forestry industry by designating the Broadback as a protected area. The move follows the signing of the Baril-Moses Agreement, which saw 4600 square kilometres of pristine forest remain unprotected.

Logging and road building have already impacted 90% of Waswanipi's traditional territory and photographs taken during Greenpeace's visit show both the destruction that has been incurred by logging and the raw beauty of the area that remains untouched.

Nicolas Mainville, spokesperson and forest campaigner for Greenpeace Quebec, told *the Nation* that the message Waswanipi and Greenpeace have delivered to Quebec, Canada and the rest of the world is loud and clear – the Broadback region is not for sale.

"Through our network the message from Waswanipi has been heard across the world. Offices in Europe, Asia and the United States have all been spreading this message," he said.

"Waswanipi's been asking for protection for over 10 years," Mainville added. "The recent development of the Baril-Moses Agreement triggered a very strong reaction [from the community]. Not only from the

Chief [Marcel Happyjack] and Deputy Chief [Mandy Gull] but also the tallymen, the trappers' association, basically the entire community is behind this. Waswanipi's position is very clear and there's no margin of manoeuvre for the logging industry."

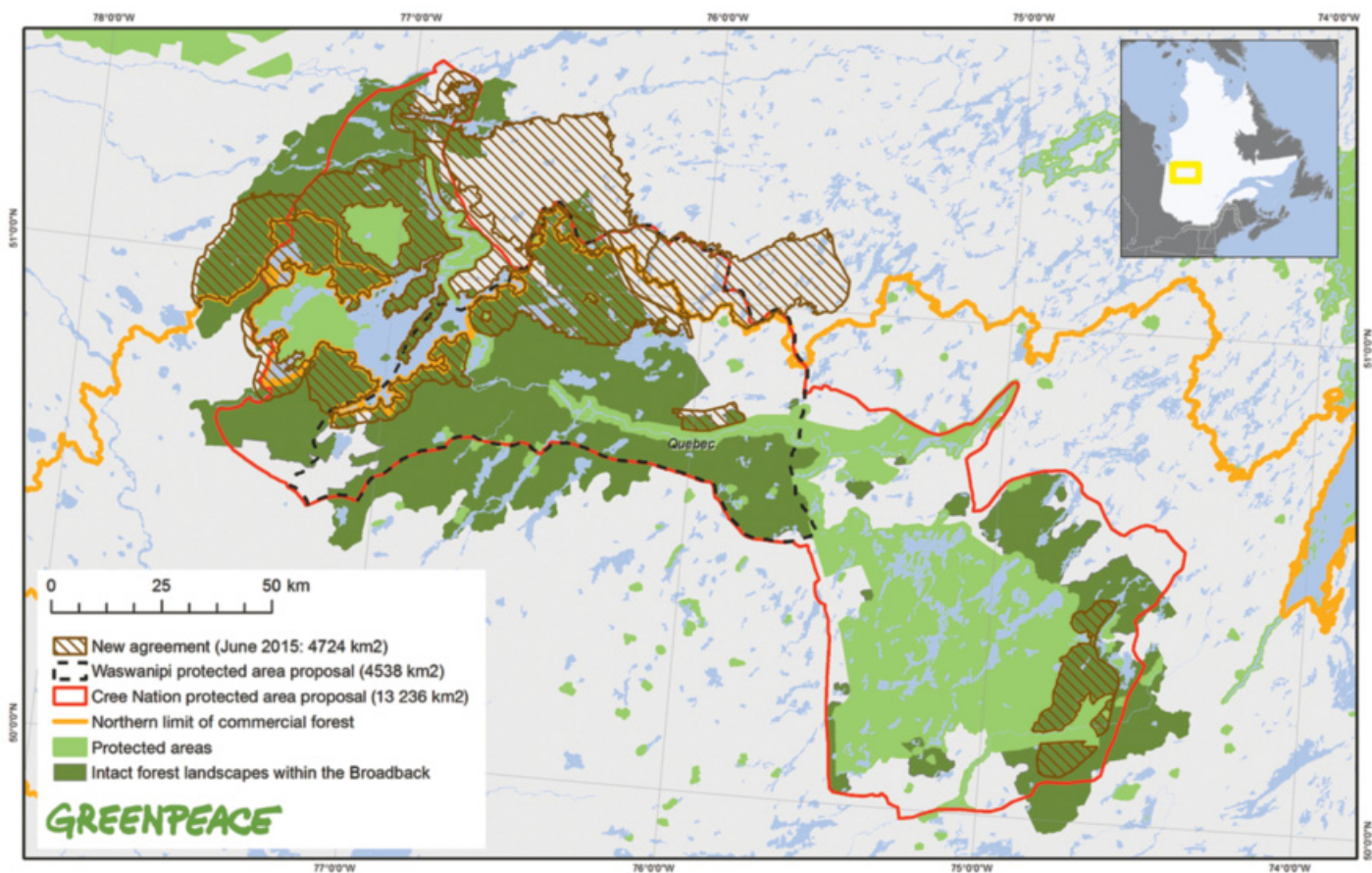
Mainville said that Greenpeace has worked with communities in Eeyou Istchee over the years to help with various conservation efforts and the signing of the Baril-Moses Agreement provided an opportunity for the organization to strengthen their ties with Waswanipi. In 2010, Greenpeace published a report that identified the Broadback as a key conservation hotspot in Canada.

"There was a confluence of interest at the ecological and cultural level," Mainville said. "According to our mapping, these areas that have been left out of the Baril-Moses Agreement are high density, old growth forests, what you call pristine areas, areas untouched by industry. The Broadback is one of the last remaining areas of this kind.

"After the [Baril-Moses] Agreement there was an urgent call from Waswanipi because the agreement failed to deliver what Waswanipi has been asking for so many years. For Greenpeace it was an easy match. Knowing that the community is so mobilized to save this area, it was the least we could do to help amplify the message through the video and the petition."

Mainville noted that the major purchasers of paper and wood products worldwide are now paying close





attention to what's happening in the Broadback thanks to the international campaign.

"The marketplace is not interested in buying products coming from controversial areas," Mainville noted, "so it should be a sign to logging companies, especially Resolute Forest Products, who is the biggest player in the area. It would be a pretty disastrous business plan to invest time, money and resources to go try and extract those trees."

Mainville said that so far there have been more than 200,000 views on the Broadback campaign video, which is posted on YouTube, greenpeace.org and the aforementioned www.savethebroadback.ca. Thousands across Canada have signed the online petition.

"You would expect the Quebec government to prioritize the areas that are under threat and that are the most valuable culturally and ecologically," Mainville told *the Nation*. "Not to say that what has been protected [in the Baril-Moses Agreement] is not a good thing, but a lot of what got protected was unproductive areas, areas that industry would never have touched."

According to appendix C of the Baril-Moses Agreement, the provincial government has agreed to engage in "meaningful conversation" with the commu-



nity of Waswanipi regarding their concerns and commitment to protect their land. Mainville said that based on the signed agreement, this is something that should happen "theoretically" no later than December 1.

"There should be negotiations happening soon," he said. "Hopefully the government will listen to the thousands of people from what Waswanipi and what they intend by 'meaningful conversation' is not just imposing the desires of the industry but respecting the desires of the community. The issue is not resolved until the entire Broadback gets full protection."

Diamond mine fails to improve conditions

news

Documentary sheds light on Attawapiskat's plight

by Irkar Beljaars

Few stories illustrate the widening chasm between rich and poor as clearly as the story of Attawapiskat. The chasm is captured in Vicki Lean's inspiring documentary, *After the Last River*.

When the world's largest diamond company, De Beers, opened a mine 90 km upstream from the First Nation community in northern Ontario, community members and environmental groups were concerned. They hired Lean's father, Dr. David Lean, an environmental biologist specializing in ecotoxicology, to analyze the effect of the mining activity on mercury levels downstream.

In 2008, Vicki Lean visited the community with his father. "The trip opened my eyes to a very complicated situation," she said.

Vicki Lean found herself drawn to the story of Attawapiskat and continued visiting the community regularly over the course of her Masters in Fine Arts at Toronto's York University. As such, she was present – and shooting – during the community's housing crisis in 2011.

The South African-based De Beers had recently closed down controversial operations in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo and they were trying to improve their public image by mining in Canada. Company representatives visited Attawapiskat every few months for community meetings, but never stayed long.

Vicki Lean explained that there was a certain degree of engagement between De Beers and Attawapiskat, but that it wasn't without problems. In early 2013, community members blockaded the ice road to the Victor Mine, and the two parties entered into mediation.

Not being a community member herself, Vicki Lean could not say if all the issues had been resolved sufficiently, but she believes community members would say that many things still need to be addressed before the company opens another mine on their traditional territory.

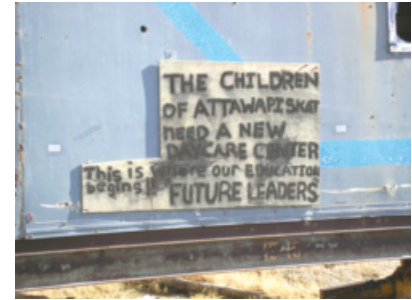
Many of these problems concern the Impact and Benefit Agreement (IBA). The IBA is only available to First Nation members, so Vicki Lean was only able to discuss what had been described to her. She explained that it was essentially "a business deal between Attawapiskat leaders and De Beers about what the benefits would be and a framework to address the environmental costs."

However, there are gaps in terms of the process and costs of implementation. Moreover, Vicki Lean explained, "It doesn't address high need areas in the community, like housing and infrastructure, the focus is only on jobs and business opportunities."

The IBA includes a trust fund, but that is earmarked for future generations and cannot be applied to current problems, like the housing shortage.

The Harper government's use of a third-party manager during the housing crisis illustrates the strained relationship between the government and Ottawa. Evidence of this can be seen in the treatment of Chief Theresa Spence during her six-week-long hunger strike in late 2012 and early 2013, which is included in the film.

Of this rocky relationship with the federal government, Vicki Lean stated, "The film really shows how much the current government has taken a hostile stance against First Nation communities that speak out,



like Attawapiskat did. Getting a third-party manager was unreasonable and unlawful, according to the Federal Court, and the government wanted to tap into a deep-seated stereotype that unfortunately still exists in Canada."

After the Last River shows what life is like in Attawapiskat with people living in shacks and tents, with buildings in serious need of repair and often contaminated with black mould. It highlights various medical issues that community members face, including autism and heart defects. It documents protesters braving frigid temperatures to demand a better school.

These hardships stand in harsh contrast to luxurious Toronto events – featuring ice sculptures and dancers – to promote Canadian diamonds. While the community has finally received its much-needed new school, a multitude of problems still remain unaddressed.

For more info:
www.afterthelastriver.com

MOCREEBEC EYYOU COMMUNITY ADOPTS AND UNVEILS A NEW LOGO



With this new logo, we confirm our inherent right of Eeyou-Eenou Istchee as our homeland and our inheritance. We, as all Eeyou-Eenou, wherever we may be, are part of the Eeyou-Eenou (Cree) Nation of Eeyou-Eenou Istchee.

Our logo identifies the historical, ancestral and cultural survival connection we have with the land (Eeyou-Eenou Istchee); to the water (the bay, rivers and lakes); to the animals and fish (wild game, fish and waterfowl).

We choose to identify ourselves as MoCreebec Eeyoud, both individually and collectively as a community who reside in Moose Factory and Moosonee, Ontario.

The new official MoCreebec Eeyoud logo is another small step towards community status recognition.

MoCreebec has come a long way since the association was established back in 1980. MoCreebec offers a variety of programs and services designed to serve the MoCreebec community, in areas such as health, housing, employment, education, and communication.

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Homage to Gerti Murdoch

by Donald Nicholls,
Cree Justice Coordinator

The Cree-Quebec Judicial Advisory Committee and the Cree Nation Government Department of Justice and Correctional Services would like to express their condolences to the family of Gerti (Diamond) Murdoch, of the Cree Nation of Waskaganish, and to all who had the opportunity to work with her.

She was someone who made an impact in whatever she did. Whether it was mentoring others, building

Cree-language programs, administrating schools, coordinating projects, chairing committees, representing her community or schools, sewing clothes for special occasions in people's lives, or the many other activities she



Gerti Murdoch

was involved in, she made a difference.

Her 35 years with the Cree School Board highlighted her passion for education and children. She was appointed a member of the Cree-Quebec Judicial Advisory Committee for the Cree Nation Government in 2007. In 2013, Gerti was appointed Chair of this Committee, and in 2013 took an active role in coordinating the Cree Justice Terminology project.

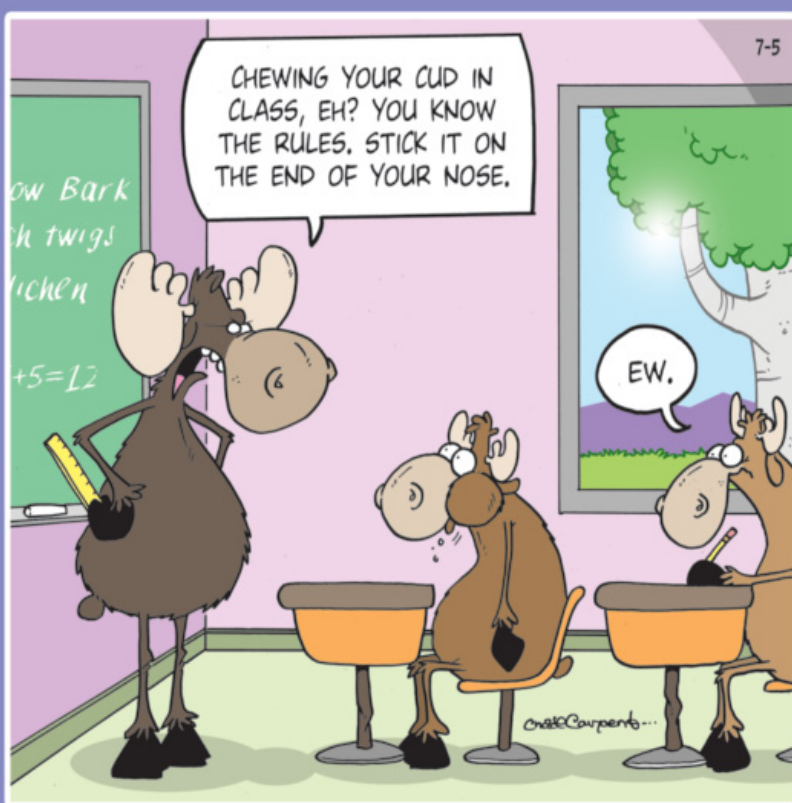
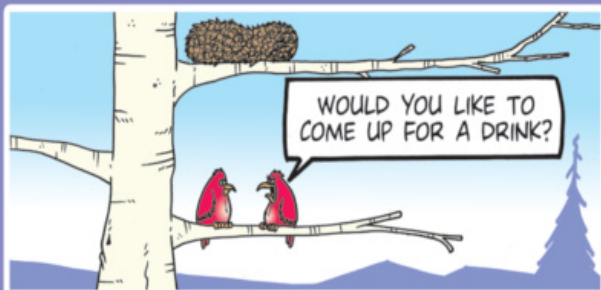
In the 1980s, Gerti was trained by the Quebec government to be one of the first Cree Justices of the Peace, and she sat on the committee to work with Quebec to look at

possible Cree Justices of the Peace and Cree courts. She also worked locally on the Waskaganish Justice Committee.

She enjoyed her work in justice, and was respected for her contributions and wisdom. The committee and Cree Nation Government Department of Justice and Correctional Services express their appreciation to her family and community, and share the sense of loss of a great Cree woman leader. Her contributions locally and regionally will continue to provide a better environment for our children and citizens.

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Demanding justice

Annual march for missing and murdered Indigenous women sparks hope and anger

written by Joshua Grant photos by Joshua Grant and Alan Harrington



The 10th annual march for missing and murdered Indigenous women in Montreal October 4 was an emotional affair. Organized by the Missing Justice Collective and the Montreal Centre for Gender Advocacy, the event saw close to a thousand people gather in Cabot Square before walking down Sainte-Catherine street to Phillips Square, carrying signs and banners commemorating loved ones lost over the years.

The theme of this year's event was justice. Notable guests included Mohawk activist Ellen Gabriel, Melissa Mollen Dupuis of Idle No More and Nakuset of the Montreal Native Women's Shelter and the Urban Aboriginal Strategy Network, among many others.

Speakers took to the podiums in Cabot and Phillips squares prior and following the march to share stories of loss, sorrow and anger. Others expressed hope in the opportunity provided by the upcoming federal election and the promises made by the Liberal and NDP parties should they come in to power.



Elder and Kahnawake resident Kawennotas Sedalia Fazio was pleased with the turnout at the march but said that First Nations men and women alike organize and participate in these types of events mainly because they have no choice.

"Events like this are kind of a last resort for us," she told *the Nation*. "We're not a people who like to protest and be loud and be out there disturbing whatever peace there is. But in instances like this where we've asked for help over and over again and nothing happens we have no other options. It's only events like this march that can bring about any change."

In a stirring speech, Fazio asked the audience what would happen if the sun, the sky, the waters, the plants and the trees decided one day to stop doing their work of bringing life to earth, affirming that it is everyone's responsibility as human beings to care for the planet and those who inhabit it.

"How much longer is this going to go on," she asked in an interview with *the Nation*. "How many more girls, mothers, sisters, daughters are we going to lose before they [the Canadian government] recognize that this is a problem? Because right now they're choosing to ignore us."

Fazio recalled the case of Tiffany Morrison, a Kahnawake woman who went missing in 2006, noting that while the police said they were doing everything in their power to find her it was a construction worker who found her remains in a wooded area close to her home.

"Tiffany Morrison went missing, and it was road workers who found her, not the police," she said, "She was found five minutes from home. It's sickening. They said they looked for her everywhere."

While the RCMP says that the number of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada total around 1200, activist groups such as the Native Women's Association of Canada and the now defunct (courtesy of funding cuts by the Harper government) Sisters in Spirit have compiled research and statistics indicating that the number is actually closer to 3000.

A few positive notes from the Montreal march were the number of non-Natives involved in the demonstration.

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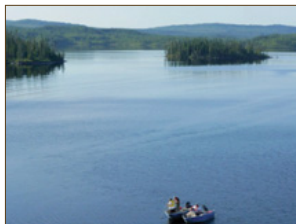
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The contest runs from October 2, 2015, through December 3, 2015, and is open to members of the Cree nation living in one of the Native communities of Eeyou Istchee who are at least 18 years of age. Limit of one entry per person per day. The winner will be announced at 8:00 a.m. on December 9, 2015, during the Hydlo and Friends radio show on JBCCS.



"It's heartwarming to know that there are at least some non-Indigenous people on our side," said Fazio. "But is it enough to push the powers that be to do something? We don't know and only time will tell. It's been 10 years [we've been protesting] and so far it hasn't changed anything with the government. In the government's eyes everything's okay. No matter how much we march, how much we plead. If the govern-

ment changes will it make any difference? Again, only time will tell."

The demonstrators marched past throngs of shoppers and passersby to the beat of traditional drums and honour songs, drawing curious stares from onlookers.

"You go on social media and you'll see 100 good comments, and then you'll see those 10 comments of people who just don't care," said Fazio. "The worst thing we can hear as Indigenous people is 'just

get over it'. It's not something that happened 100 years ago, it's something that's ongoing, that's happening each and every day of our lives.

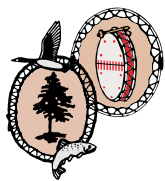
"It's hard for me," she continued, "I feel I have a close connection to everyone. They're our women. It's not just a connection to anyone that I know personally; it's the connection that these are our people. I don't care where they were from, what Nation they were from. Where are they and why is no one doing anything?"

Cheryl McDonald, also from Kahnawake, lost her sister Darlene in 1988. Unbeknownst to her family, "Darlou" was dealing with a situation of domestic violence and depression and felt she had nowhere to turn to for support. McDonald said that after years of suffering in silence she found comfort rallying behind the countless other Indigenous Canadians who have been through similar circumstances.

She told the crowd that gatherings like these are about personal and collective healing, summoning the strength and willpower necessary to move forward and ensure that future generations of First Nations men, women and children are educated, informed and have access to the resources necessary to tackle issues such as these.

Performances by the Buffalo Hat Singers and Kahnawake dancer Barbara Diabo rounded out the gathering in Phillips Square as candles were distributed and lit and sweet grass burned in memory of the women no longer with us.

"Let us pray that next year we will gather again not to beg for an inquiry," said Fazio in her closing remarks, "but to celebrate the fact that something has been done to protect our women."



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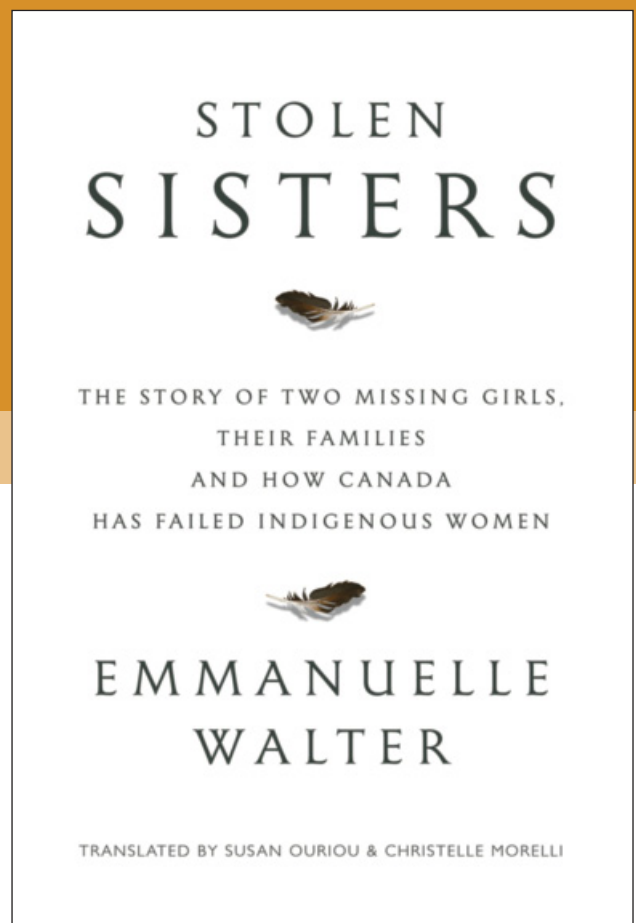
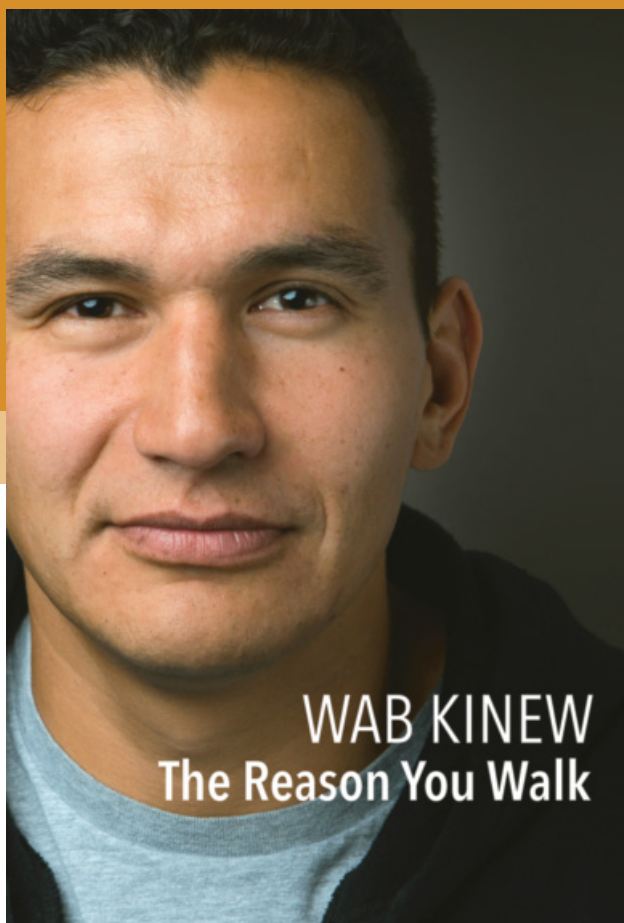
Through these funds, the DOJCS (Department of Justice and Correctional Services) provides financial assistance to community members willing to implement initiatives that facilitate and improve the administration of justice for the Crees across Eeyou Istchee.

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For details, please visit the DOJCS website at: <http://creejusticefunds.ca> or phone (418) 923-2661, ext. 1180.



Two new pictures of Native Canada

New books profile different aspects of Indigenous issues in this country

by Jesse Staniforth

The end of September brought the publication of two very different books about Indigenous issues in Canada. The first, Wab Kinew's memoir, *The Reason You Walk*, is ultimately celebratory, and speaks to a wide audience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across Canada and the US. The second, Emmanuelle Walter's *Stolen Sisters*, is a much darker book intended to shake the non-Indigenous public out of their ignorance and apathy about the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

Together they form a portrait of this particular moment in Canadian-Indigenous relations. On one hand, some of the first generations to avoid residential schools are coming to take the reins of Indigenous leadership and embracing their languages and traditions. On the other, the reality of systemic racism continues to create an environment from which women disappear and are murdered with virtual impunity.

Wab Kinew's book deals with darkness as it tells of the internment and abuse of his father in residential

school. He then follows his father – Dr. Tobasonakwut Kinew – through the painful fight against cancer that came at the end of his life. It also contains a retelling of Wab Kinew's dark years, during which he was heading toward addiction and self-destruction. What turned both of them around, he says, was the comfort and power of traditional Anishinaabe spirituality, in the form of sweats, Sundances, ceremonies, songs and the revitalization of the Anishinaabemowin language.

"It's my face on the cover and it's my memoir," Wab Kinew told *the Nation*, "but my father is the hero of it, and his story is the arc of the book."

From the child punished in residential schools for practicing Anishinaabe traditions at the funeral of his own father, Tobasonakwut Kinew grew to become an internationally renowned figure. He famously presented Pope Benedict XVI an eagle feather to measure his willingness to embrace Indigenous spirituality on the occasion of the Vatican apology for residential schools. His son finds in that life much to meditate upon about the

GO FORTH AND CONQUER



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Rock Competition

THE CREE MINERAL EXPLORATION BOARD



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General prize category:			Prospectors category:
1st prize	2nd prize	3rd prize	One prize of
\$1,500	\$1,000	\$500	\$2,000

DEADLINE: OCTOBER 31

The Cree Mineral Exploration Board's Rock Competition to reward new mineral discoveries in Eeyou Istchee

Requirements:	Deadline and shipping:	Don't forget:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New discovery • Sample must be the size of a fist • Sample must be located on a map • Complete the application form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMEB assumes the analysis expenses of the participating samples • The contest ends on October 31 • Shipping is at participant's expense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hints on the ground: look for rusty surfaces • Hints after breaking: sample metallic minerals

NAME _____

PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

COMMUNITY _____

SAMPLE LOCATION PLACE NAME _____

MAP _____

GPS COORDINATES _____ E _____ N

SAMPLE COLLECTED FROM

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Tel: 819-978-0264 ext. 327 Fax: 819-978-3834 E-mail: youceflarbi@creenet.com

issue of reconciliation – an idea he says we witness more as a word than an action.

“We often think of ‘reconciliation’ as a term that applies to trying to fix a relationship between Indigenous people and the rest of Canada,” Wab Kinew said. “And it does. But it’s also much bigger than that. In this book there is that form of reconciliation, but there’s also the reconciliation between different faiths, and reconciliation between generations in a family. Eventually there’s the reconciliation with the loss of loved ones after they leave this world.”

Wab Kinew noted that reconciliation is a state that can only occur, for example, when the party with the power has stopped harming the party with less power.

“If the residential schools were still open, I wouldn’t be talking about reconciliation,” he said. “There’s a lot in the book where it seems like I’m pumping the brakes on reconciliation, but that’s because I don’t want to ignore the reality of the situation. Sometimes we do have to call a spade a spade and be honest about the work that needs to be done by the people or the person on the other side of the relationship.”

Wab Kinew chronicles his father’s and his own increasing commitment to Anishinaabe spiritual practice, recounting his experiences of ceremonies and Sundances in loving and exquisite detail. That was, he said, very much on purpose, beginning from the problem that most non-Indigenous Canadians have little in the way of concrete ideas about what it means to be Anishinaabe, or Indigenous in general.

“I don’t know that the average Canadian has a deep understanding of the beauty and the strength of First Nations and Indigenous culture and why those of us who are traditional hang on so dearly to those things,” Wab Kinew said. “Spirituality is able to turn somebody’s life around when they’re suffering from inconsolable grief, or when they’re on a self-destructive path because there’s something much bigger than yourself that happens in that circle.”

No stranger to controversy, Wab Kinew takes a strong stand on the issue of Indigenous voting.

“A lot of people are talking about getting rid of Harper,” he observed. “But it’s bigger than that. That’s a step, but it’s about starting to exercise your political muscle so that not just this time, but in every future election, politicians listen to you and talk about your issues. If you’re against Harper, you’re not going to beat him with a protest or a revolution. You’re going

to beat him by showing up on October 19 and voting his candidates out of office.”

That sentiment is likely one that French journalist Emmanuelle Walter shares, judging by *Stolen Sisters*, her book-length report on missing and murdered Indigenous women. Though she immigrated to Canada only five years ago, Walter was quickly immersed in the story of Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander, two residents of the Algonquin Nation of Kitigan-Zibi who went missing from nearby Maniwaki and were never seen again.



Wab Kinew

When she moved to Canada, Walter said, she first began hearing of the issue of missing and murdered women – a subject that shocked her enormously.

“I really thought of Canada as a country respected for its human rights record, [a place that] was very different from the United States,” she said. Soon, the subject “became an obsession. I began to read and read. My husband told me I should write a book. I’ve written several books [in France], but this one was the most emotionally moving.”

Soon she was visiting Kitigan-Zibi and spending time with the family and friends of the missing girls, profiling both the community and its individuals in their attempt to deal with their grief at the loss. She writes

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Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

creehealth.org



Emmanuelle Walter

the book in the first person, bringing the reader along as she meets the families of the girls and the community police who looked for them (who many community members say didn't look hard enough).

As the topic opens up, the issue of systemic racism appears more and more prominently. Police assume the girls ran away because they believe that's what Native girls do, even though neither had any reason to, and both left their wallets behind. Politicians claim that any missing and murdered Indigenous women are essentially responsible for their own murders if they use drugs or are involved in sex work. These assumptions contain what Walter pointed out was a racism she encountered even among her progressive friends in Montreal when she began the book.

"Month after month writing this book I felt really alone," she

said. "People told me, 'It won't work. Nobody cares. It's not a popular cause.' Even left-wing people told me that! People would be more interested in Palestine than going to a reserve! They see the poverty as ongoing, and they don't know what to do. They feel powerless and exasperated, so they say, 'We're not interested in that issue: it's too much, it's too hard.'"

The good news, she said, is that following the publication of the book in French last year, it opened a long overdue discussion in Quebec about Indigenous issues. Walter said she was being approached for interviews once a week or more, even appearing on the flagship Radio-Canada program *Tout le monde en parle*. It seems, she said, like Quebec is beginning to wake up to its own colonial history.

"When you read Quebec history, Quebecers were [dominated] by the English," she said. "So now Quebecers say they're colonized by the English, and that means they can't be the bad people. But in the reception of my book, I was surprised that people were willing to recognize that problem."

In Quebec, she noted, 70% of Indigenous people live on reserve, and in many cases do not interact much with settler communities. This divide encourages Quebecers to believe that they do not carry the burden of colonialism the way that English Canada does.

"We don't see them, and so we think we are the colonized. We have the fantasy that in the fur trade time, we were close to them! We were friends and equal and we were so open minded – Quebec people have a special relationship to this issue, that's for sure."

LEAPING TOGETHER

Indigenous leaders join Canadian environmentalists and progressive organizers in calling for a new left-wing movement

by Jesse Staniforth



March against coal-fired power plant in Sompeta, India

"As long as the environment becomes an issue, people will become slowly educated into understanding that if the land is being attacked, we are being attacked as Indigenous people – because our identity is tied to the land."

ELLEN GABRIEL

Protesters against gold mine in Halkidiki, Greece





Burning sugar cane

“As long as the environment becomes an issue,” said Kanesatake activist Ellen Gabriel, “people will become slowly educated into understanding that if the land is being attacked, we are being attacked as Indigenous people – because our identity is tied to the land.”

Gabriel was participating in a press event ahead of the Montreal screening of Avi Lewis’ documentary *This Changes Everything*, about Naomi Klein’s book of the same name, at Concordia University’s Cinema Politica. The event served as an opportunity to promote the Leap Manifesto, a document calling for a more progressive Canada that Lewis and Klein were instrumental in organizing. The Leap Manifesto demands a variety of changes in the way Canada behaves economically, ecologically and socially – particularly with regard to its Indigenous nations.

In May, Gabriel and other Indigenous leaders, activists and thinkers were invited to join labour activists and other left-wing organizers in a series of discussions that led to the Manifesto. That document calls, in part, for full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, priority public funding for clean-energy projects in Indigenous communities, the scrapping of existing free-trade deals and a minimum income for all Canadians.

Gabriel was among the first to sign the document, which has since been signed by thousands of people, including Cree Mrs. Universe Ashley Callingbull, authors Thomas King and Joseph Boyden, Lubicon activist Melina Laboucan-Massimo, and Idle No More organizer Clayton Thomas-Muller – along with huge non-Indigenous names like Pamela Anderson, Leonard Cohen, David Suzuki, Alanis Morissette and members of Arcade Fire.

“It was a mixture of Indigenous people and civil society organizations, and we talked about how we could support one another,” Gabriel said of the talks. “It’s interesting that they’ve put forward the promotion of Indigenous people’s collective human rights and self-determination, and acknowledged us as constantly being on the frontlines. There needs to be a time in Canadian history when respect and justice for Indigenous peoples happens. Maybe this is the movement that will start it, or maybe it’ll be the genesis of other movements that will also come together and support a planet where we are no longer a plague on Mother Earth.”

Klein noted that many of the Indigenous thinkers invited to participate in the discussion – such as Russ Diabo, Arthur Manuel and Crystal Lameman – were those who had risen to prominence fighting pipelines and fossil-fuel extraction, and that the causes of Indigenous sovereignty and environmental justice are closely linked.

“Caretaking of the land and one another was the theme that came out most strongly,” Klein said of the Manifesto. “That’s the framework of the document, the idea that it begins with respecting the original caretakers of this land, the water, the air – that’s the foundation from which everything else flows. I think that’s a big reason why the document is resonating with people.”

For too long, she underlined, progressive activists only became interested in Indigenous nations when they served as their foot soldiers in environmental battles, and too often ignored Indigenous needs as soon as the war was finished – leaving those on the frontlines feeling abandoned.

Klein recalls visiting Phillip Whiteman, Jr. at his home in the Northern Cheyenne reservation of Little Bighorn, Montana, which sits on top of one of the largest un-mined beds of coal left in the world. Whiteman and his family and community have been fighting attempts to mine that coal for decades.

“By the time I first went there in 2010 Whiteman said, ‘I just can’t keep asking my people to suffer with me,’” she said. “It’s really about that – the problem of only saying no [to extraction] and not having support for giving Indigenous communities resources to have something to say yes to.”

7th Gala Event

Celebrating Cree Entrepreneurs

Promoting Cree Business

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Final cohort

The Apatisiwin Agreement with Hydro-Québec nears its end

by Joshua Grant

Eleven years after the Apatisiwin Agreement between Hydro-Québec and the James Bay Cree was reached, the final cohorts of the Technical Employment with Hydro-Québec (TEHQ) program have begun their two-year training programs.

This last group of prospective employees have exactly two years to complete their studies in automated systems electro-mechanics at Rouyn-Noranda's Centre Polymétier, and in industrial construction and maintenance mechanics at the Centre de formation professionnel in Amos. According to the agreement, 150 qualified Cree employees were to be hired by 2017.

Niskamoon, working under the umbrella of the Cree Regional Authority and the Grand Council of the Crees, has worked with the Cree School Board since the Apatisiwin Agreement was implemented in 2003. The two concerted their efforts to ensure Cree beneficiaries receive the necessary training for the permanent jobs that Hydro-Québec is supposed to provide.





Automated Systems Electro-Mechanics 1st year group

"This is the beginning of the end," said Niskamoon Communications Officer Cynthia Taylor. "Here at Niskamoon we implemented a structure to help follow through with the agree-

ment and facilitate access to the program and the funding. There was an extension of the agreement to allow for another cohort, but because there are only two years left on the agreement only

the two-year programs were available this year."

Taylor stressed the importance of a technical orientation for these programs put in place in 2009, saying that the orientation was instrumental in preparing students for the challenges they face in the challenging technical programs that are delivered solely in French. She called it a great example of how to help Cree students achieve academic success.

"The program originally started without an orientation and the students were coming into the program unprepared and a lot of time was spent getting them up to speed," she noted.

The compulsory orientation saw students come together for two weeks in Cantley, Quebec. There, students had the chance to



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get to know each other and prepare for the years ahead. They developed a sense of community, teamwork, and a clear understanding of what would be expected of them – and the attitudes and habits they needed to successfully complete their program.

Presentations from industry professionals offered a picture of life in the workplace following graduation. Workshops and animation activities helped students ready themselves for the culture shock once they leave their communities and are immersed in the rigorous, French-language technical programs. More enjoyable activities included canoe trips, bowling and billiards.

Diane Thibault, Niskamoon's Training and Employment Director, said the orientation better prepared students to identify problems they are likely encounter during the school year.

"It gives the students the tools for success," she said. "The candidates were not prepared to face the reality of such a rigorous program, with such variety, such complexity. The shock was too big; there was a huge gap between their way of life and what we were expecting from them in the program both in the training and in the private life. We were uprooting them, bringing them in to a big city."

Workshop animator Michelle Coulombe taught the TEHQ students both before and after the orientation session was given. "When the groups arrive after an orientation session they are armed and equipped," she said. "There is a big difference."

Students and teachers alike attest to the positive impact Niskamoon's TEHQ orientation has had on their



Eeyou Istchee James Bay
Regional Government

The Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government (EIJBRG) is a municipal body governed by the Cities and Towns Act. It is the very first public management structure on category III lands in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay territory. By providing a structure adapted to the current issues and challenges of the territory, it acts as a catalyst for regional development as well as the development of the natural resources and the territory according to its specific needs. The Regional Government is looking to fill the position of Director General.

DIRECTOR GENERAL

Reporting to the Council, the **DIRECTOR GENERAL** will be responsible for the management of the Regional Government. This includes:

- Planning, organising, steering, and controlling all the administrative activities under the Cities and Towns Act, the Act establishing the EIJBRG and any other related legislation in effect;
- Leading and coordinating the application of all Council decisions;
- Ensuring the supervision of the EIJBRG's management and staff;
- Structuring the services in order to optimise operations and to streamline the expenditures;
- Presenting and recommending to the Council the objectives of all the EIJBRG's departments and administration, the operational and capital budgets as well as all major changes in the plans;
- Representing the EIJBRG on regional and provincial organisations;
- Actively participating in all operational aspects and supporting the department heads;
- Encouraging the involvement of the personnel, the collaborators and the partners toward the objectives and the quality of services for the residents.

REQUIRED SKILLS

- Management skills and administrative thoroughness.
- Ability to communicate and work in a multidisciplinary management environment.
- Ability to analyse and summarise with an attention to follow-up and priorities.
- Leadership skills to mobilise and rally.
- Developed political sense and understanding of geopolitical issues.
- Ability to establish harmonious relationships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals.

POSITION REQUIREMENTS

- Completion of a Bachelor's degree in business adm. or another related field.
- Completion of a MBA or a Master's Degree in public adm. would be an asset.
- Must possess 8 to 10 years of managerial experience in a municipal environment or in the field of public administration.
- Must possess a very good knowledge of the municipal environment and knowledge of the First Nations' environment.
- Must have experience with different levels of government and relations with elected officials.
- Must possess excellent communication skills in French and English.
- Must be available to travel and possess a valid driver's license.
- Knowledge of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay territory, the realities of the Cree Nation of Quebec and the issues related to the development of natural resources, tourism, economic resources and legal affairs would be an asset.

WORK CONDITIONS

The workplace is located in **Matagami**. Competitive remuneration established according to the current salary scale and experience.

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to the following address: recrutement@lebleu2935.com

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“It changed my perception on things, it helped me a lot and it helped me realize certain qualities I didn’t think I had.”

social and academic lives. Romy Kistabish, a first-year Mechanical Industrial student, said he was hesitant to attend the orientation at first but in the end he learned a lot about himself and how to maintain a positive approach.

“It changed my perception on things, it helped me a lot and it helped me realize certain qualities I didn’t think I had,” Kistabish acknowledged.

Jennyfer Boutin, in her first year of Automated Systems Electro-Mechanics, said that following the two weeks of training and preparation she now has the confidence to succeed in her program to become an apparatus electrician. She will join her father and her sister, who is also in the program, in jobs at Hydro-Québec.

“I’m anxious to start working for them and to start my life, buy a house and start my future plan,” said Boutin.



Industrial Construction and Maintenance Mechanics 1st year group

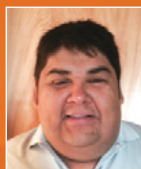
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- Contribute to achieving an objective of “Paperless Council Meetings”;
- Ensure follow-up on various by-laws and legislative processes;
- Maintain a schedule of follow-ups, by-laws and other documents;
- Planning of Council meetings;
- Ensures follow-up of claims and complaints;
- Ensures follow-up of litigation files.

REQUIREMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor of Law;
- Member in good standing of the Quebec Bar or « Chambre des notaires »;
- Minimum five years of experience in similar functions;
- Exceptional analytical and synthesis skills;
- Knowledge of municipal laws and legal context of First Peoples, notably pertaining to the Cree Nation of Quebec;
- Sound and objective judgement;
- Demonstrate tact, diplomacy and discretion;
- Advanced writing skills in French and English;
- Capable of working independently, sound organizational skills and initiative;
- Strong capacity to work under pressure and ability to meet deadlines;
- Computer skills including knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite;
- Bilingualism is essential (French and English);
- Valid driver's license

Deadline to forward applications: October 30, 2015 at 5:00 p.m.

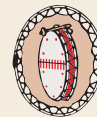
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A call for transparency and meaningful self-governance

by Joanne Willis Newton, Member of Cree Nation of Chisasibi and Cree Nation Government

The Grand Council of the Crees and the Cree Regional Authority announced the new agreements with Quebec and Canada several years ago to much fanfare. The message was that the Cree Nation was entering a new era of self-governance. The Cree Regional Authority would be replaced by the Cree Nation Government, which would have greater powers, such as the authority to enact by-laws of general application in Eeyou Istchee.

Although this raised concerns about interference with the self-governing powers of individual Cree Nations, we were assured that Eeyouch/Eenouch were to have a real voice in nation building. After all, as adult members of the individual Cree Nations we are the voting members of the GCC and CNG.

I have attended and actively participated in the last two Annual General Assemblies of the GCC/CNG to protect the education rights of Cree youth. What I have seen causes me great concern. Putting aside my concerns about how the education rights issue is being handled by the GCC/CNG Board, I have a deeper concern about the gross disregard for true self-governance and the message we are sending to our youth – our future leaders – when our own government conducts itself in this manner.

In particular, what does it say to our youth if the rules of the meeting

are so irregular and ambiguous that a Cree attorney and even our Chiefs are unable to have their causes put before the Assembly for a vote? What does it say to our youth when the GCC/CNG Board member chairing the meeting gets to decide what matters will be put to a vote, or what matters will be decided by the GCC/CNG Board? What does it say to our youth when the Chiefs and delegates at the Assembly quietly accept this behaviour?

I want our youth to believe that they have the power to shape the path of our Cree Nation so they will be motivated to be actively involved in self-governance. I want the youth to believe they can improve conditions in their communities and help achieve social justice. I want the youth to understand that it is not only their right to participate, but also their responsibility. Equally important, I want older CNG members to appreciate that they need to make room for the youth and mentor them by good example.

In order that all CNG members understand what to expect at future Annual General Assemblies, the following are fundamental for transparency and meaningful participation at future meetings.

Adequate Notice:

It is not enough that the date, time and place of the Annual General Assembly be publicly announced in advance. The notice of the meeting

should include a proposed agenda covering what business items will be discussed. It should also inform members how to request additional agenda items, and set aside at least a half-day for “new business” to be added and discussed. This will help members make informed attendance decisions and to have a greater voice in the Assemblies.

Disclosure:

The Assembly always includes a vote to adopt very lengthy and detailed documents: the minutes and resolutions from the prior year’s Annual General Assembly; and the GCC/CNG Financial Statement and Auditor’s Report for the last budget period. The Annual Reports of the GCC/CNG are also presented. In order for the Chiefs, delegates, and other CNG members to have a meaningful opportunity to consider and discuss these documents, they should be made publicly available in advance, through direct mailings to members and online through the GCC/CNG website.

If so much work and expense is going into the production of these documents, doesn’t it make sense to ensure the information reaches its intended audience? All documents should also be made available in Cree syllabics. Many Eeyouch/Eenouch, particularly our Elders, are not fluent in spoken or written English or French.

Unfortunately, there are many CNG members who are not fluent



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Request of Name Change Notice

Please take notice Edith Lorraine Janice Diana Niganayabinogow Atchynia, residing at 51 Chisayaku, Whapmagoostui, QC, is requesting from the Directeur de l'Etat Civil to change the name of: Edith Lorraine Janice Diana Niganayabinogow Atchynia for the one of: Edith Lorraine Janice Diana Niganayabinogow George. This notice has been signed in Whapmagoostui on October 2, 2015 by Edith Lorraine Janice Diana Niganayabinogow Atchynia.



Eeyou Istchee James Bay
Regional Government

The Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government (EIJBRG) represents a new era of governance between the Cree and the Jamesians within the Eeyou Istchee James Bay territory. The EIJBGR exercises its authority in the areas of municipal management, economic development as well as in resource and land use planning for Category III lands of Northern Québec.

LOCATION: **MATAGAMI** Full-time positions (40 hours/week) - Competitive salaries in accordance to current salary scale and various social benefits.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGER

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provides a computer problem solving service, maintenance of computer systems, ensures security of systems including confidentiality of data;
- Ensures the implementation and maintenance of IP telephone system;
- Ensures the maintenance of cellular phones, printers and other network equipment;
- Ensures the update, preparation, configuration and installation of work stations;
- Prepares user guidelines for software and applications and offers training to users;
- Provides support to attain the objectives of "Paperless Meetings" and ensures a presence during Council meetings by providing technical and computer support;
- Prepares technical specification documents for hosting communities of meetings and ensures compliance to technological needs;
- Provides support in the development and update of the web site.

REQUIREMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's degree in Computer Science;
- Five years of experience in a similar position;
- Sound knowledge in content management systems, network systems, local and wide area networks, Microsoft Office Suite, IP telephone systems, management and update of web sites and "Paperless Council meetings" software;
- Demonstrate tact, diplomacy and discretion;
- Good organizational skills, reliable and punctual;
- Ability to analyze and solve problems;
- Ability to work in remote locations and in a multicultural environment;
- Bilingualism is essential (French and English);
- Valid driver's license

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Plan and co-ordinate meetings of the Integrated Land and Resource Management Panels for the Eeyou Istchee James Bay territory (ILRMP-EIJB);
- Preparation of documents and supporting maps for the ILRMP-EIJB Committees;
- Ensure the follow-up and implementation of decisions taken by the ILRMP-EIJB;
- Preparation of work plans and other relevant documents (reports, maps, etc.);
- Actively contribute to the implementation of the EIJBGR's responsibilities related to land and natural resources.

REQUIREMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's degree in Forestry or related field;
- Member in good standing of a Professional Order;
- Experience in similar functions considered an asset;
- Exceptional analytical and synthesis skills;
- Legislative knowledge in land management and legal context of First Peoples, notably pertaining to the Cree Nation of Quebec;
- Demonstrate tact, diplomacy and discretion;
- Capable of working independently, sound organizational skills and initiative;
- Advanced writing skills in French and English;
- Strong capacity to work under pressure and ability to meet deadlines;
- Computer skills including knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite;
- Bilingualism is essential (French and English);
- Valid driver's license (extensive travel within Eeyou Istchee James Bay territory will be required for this position)

Deadline to forward applications: October 30, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. • Please forward résumés by mail or by email to:
Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government, 110 Matagami Blvd., P.O. Box. 500, Matagami, Québec, J0Y 2A0, rh@greibj-eijbrg.ca

in Cree. This is due in large part to generations of residential school students who were denied the right to communicate in Cree. Another reason is discriminatory Indian status laws that resulted in many women being denied on-reserve housing rights and being forced to raise their children elsewhere.

For these reasons, disclosure and transparency also require that we provide simultaneous translation during the Assemblies. A listening device should be made available to translate Cree into English and English into Cree as necessary. Essentially all spoken and written word should be made available in both languages so as to include all GCC/CNG members who wish to participate in these assemblies regardless of language proficiency. If there is a demand for French translation from GCC/CNG members, it should be accommodated as well.

Rules of Order:

The rules of order – that is, the rules by which discussion and voting will occur – should be uniform and made clear at the outset of each meeting. The Chairperson enforces the rules of order but must not circumvent them.

Roberts Rules of Order are generally used at local Council meetings. While I am all for modifying, or even abandoning, Western models to reflect Aboriginal custom and tradition, the fact is our individual Cree Nations are accustomed to following the protocol reflected in Roberts Rules of Order and have been using it for decades.

However, I witnessed critical deficiencies at this past Annual General Assembly that did not afford the Chiefs, community delegates and other CNG members an opportunity to fully participate in decision-making.

A set of rules was distributed with the meeting materials at the Assembly, which provided the option for a Resolution Committee to be appointed and its mandate determined by resolution at the beginning of the meeting. As near as I can make out, the rules applied at the Assembly required that any proposed decision must be submitted in advance to the Resolution Committee in the form of a written resolution before it could be presented to the membership and voted on.

This meant that no action could be taken on an agenda item when it came up for discussion unless a resolution had been submitted previously to the Resolution Committee for review. Yet it is only through discussion that appropriate action can be proposed and decided upon.

The minimum procedures that should be followed once an agenda item is introduced are as follows:

The agenda item is presented by the presenter(s). The GCC/CNG voting members are provided an opportunity to ask questions and make comments in open forum. The Chairperson may, depending on time limitations, decide when to close discussion and decide whether non-members may speak. No one may speak more than once until everyone has first had an opportunity to speak once.

The Chairperson “calls for the question,” which means he/she affords the GCC/CNG voting members an opportunity to propose that a specific decision be made or action be taken on the agenda item.

If a GCC/CNG voting member proposes a specific decision or action, it is called “bringing a motion.” The motion may be created on the spot and expressed orally, or it may have been prepared ahead of time in written form and distributed before or during the discussion.

Once a motion is on the floor, it must be supported by at least one other GCC/CNG voting member. This is called “seconding the motion.” If a motion is proposed and seconded, it is open for discussion by the GCC/CNG voting members.

If a motion is amended prior to vote, it has to be done with the consent of the proposer and the seconder. Alternatively, the proposer can withdraw the motion and either bring a new motion or allow for a new motion to be brought.

Once discussion has concluded, the Chairperson calls for a vote of the GCC/CNG voting members. A count is taken of those in favour, those opposed, and those abstaining.

If a motion does not receive sufficient votes to pass, it fails. If a motion passes, it becomes an official decision of the Assembly. These rules ensure that business items on the agenda are open for meaningful discussion and group decision-making.

Implementation:

All of the procedural fairness in the world will not promote true self-governance if decisions made at the Annual General Assembly are not respected and implemented by the GCC/CNG Board. We must hold our leaders accountable for failing to implement decisions of the Assembly in good faith and in a timely manner.

Active involvement of the people is necessary for true self-governance. When our youth see resolutions being adopted at the Annual General Assembly being ignored, the message they receive is, “why bother?” Let us make the changes necessary while our new Cree Nation Government is still in its infancy to instead send the message, “You can make a difference.”

Away or busy on October 19?

You can vote in advance.



If you're ready to vote early, you can vote at your advance polling place between October 9 and 12, from noon to 8:00 p.m.

Or you can vote at any Elections Canada office across the country any day until **October 13** at 6:00 p.m.

For all voting locations, check your voter information card, visit **elections.ca** or call **1-800-463-6868** (☎ TTY 1-800-361-8935).

Elections Canada has all the information you need to be ready to vote.

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October 19, 2015



Get a move on!

Cree kids participate in international walk to school initiative

Hand in hand with their parents and other community members, this October the children of Eeyou Istchee participated in activities celebrating “Walk to School Month,” an initiative held in over 40 countries worldwide to get children out and active.

In Mistissini, Wally Rabbitskin, a Planning, Programming and Research Officer for Physical Activity, said there were activities in all the Cree communities with the goal of getting kids active on their way to school.

Rabbitskin said it is an important annual initiative to encourage parents, children, teachers, volunteers and community members to participate in an activity that everyone can do.

“The main thing is that we want to promote the most healthy lifestyles in the community because diabetes is on the increase and we need to prevent this from happening,” said Rabbitskin.

This year students in Mistissini participated in activities October 6-8, that featured walks for different age groups followed by a healthy breakfast and some special classroom activities for everyone.

“If you look at our community’s culture and history, our people used to walk everywhere, on snowshoes in the winter and on foot to their hunting grounds in the summer. They were physically active, but nowadays things have changed. We need to be healthier and so sometimes we should be choosing to walk to work or to school,” said Rabbitskin.

“People need to be physically active for at least 30 minutes or more every day. I want to encourage everyone to be more active and walk to school.”

According to Mistissini school nurse Ashley Darbouze, this year’s event featured 30- to 40-minute walking routes for children. While this is only her second year participating in the event since arriving in Mistissini, Darbouze says the kids are enthusiastic about the event.

“The students get quite excited because a lot of them do walk to school, so to have someone encourage them to continue really helps. Also the fact that this is followed by a healthy breakfast at school is very exciting to them. We do an easier walk to school for Grades 1-3, and a harder one for Grades 4-6. This is followed by a healthy breakfast that the nutritionist puts together,” said Darbouze.

Darbouze said it is wonderful to see the impact on the young participants.

“It gets everything going. The kids are moving before they get to school so they are not waking up only after they get to class. They arrive excited because they have been active,” said Darbouze.



courtesy Dina Snowboy

At that, when it is time for these children to sit down and learn after a morning that has included physical activity and a nutritious meal, they are ready to go.

According to Stephanie Secord, a Mistissini nutritionist who plans the meal portion of the event, the goal is to share as much nutritional information and tips as possible by showing what can constitute a healthy meal.

“We keep the meal both nutritious and quick because we don’t want to disrupt classes as part of the goal here is for the kids to have a good morning at school,” explained Secord.

“We will also be passing around homemade blueberry-and-oat muffins and passing around the recipe for them. We chose these because they are healthy and because the blueberries are traditional here. We will also be serving bananas and apples with this because they are accessible to the community and are easy to peel.”

Secord said that accessibility and ease are the main factors behind the food choices for the event, choosing products that are easy to obtain and prepare. While some may have the impression that serving a healthy breakfast can be time-consuming, Secord’s menu showcased only an extra 10 minutes to prepare.

“The parents learn that even if they are running late, they can still give their children a granola bar, yoghurt and a fruit. This way kids don’t go to school with empty stomachs,” said Secord.

And, with healthier, happier, well-fed and active students, the potential for greater school outcomes increases significantly. For Rabbitskin, passing on these lessons to the youth is essential.

“The best thing for us is to talk to the young people, get them to set goals for themselves and get them to take up a healthy lifestyle because it is this that will increase their life spans,” said Rabbitskin.



Another day in paradise

by Xavier Kataquapit

Some people might call me a loner. A few of my friends may see me as a bit of a recluse. It is not that I don't like being around people, it is just that I love peace and quiet.

I grew up in the James Bay Cree culture and raised more or less close to the land. I never felt comfortable in large groups of people even though I was raised in a large family with many relations in my home community. There were pros and cons to having people around all the time in a small community. I always felt more comfortable living the life of peace and quiet on the land the way my ancestors had for thousands of years. I found life in my small isolated community difficult and overbearing sometimes.

When I flew out to the greater world for education and then work, I became intrigued by learning as much as I could about other cultures and people. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to travel much of the world and to see how other people live. I have been treated with kindness by people everywhere I have ventured on this planet. However, my best memories have to do with being in quiet places watching the sunset or sitting in a mountain village with just a few good friends.

I devote much of my time now to escaping to my cottage in a semi remote part of the north. I enjoy the tranquility of living on the banks of a beautiful little esker lake surrounded by towering pine and poplar. I take great satisfaction in hearing the geese

fly high overhead, watching the whiskey jacks dance in the tress and I bear witness to the busy lives of the squirrels and chipmunks nearby.

I like working on my camp and making it comfortable for my friends and myself. I enjoy sitting back in my cozy little cottage watching a snowstorm through a large picture window from the warmth of my living room as the tall pines sway in the fierce north winds and the lake is almost obscured by the pulsating waves of flying snow. Through the marvel of technology, I have the world at my fingertips with a high-speed internet connection to my computer. News from the world is always just a click away.

How lucky are we northerners? We have the good fortune to live in small towns or out on the land in the wilderness, worlds away from the chaos and calamity centred around greed and fear. Still, when we feel the urge, all we have to do is take a short drive, visit an airport and hop on an airplane to travel just about anywhere in the world that we choose. How lucky are we to know what real peace and tranquility is here in the north?

When I venture into other parts of the world in Asia or Europe, I often show people a photo of my little camp on the banks of a small northern lake. Everyone reacts in the same way. They can't believe that I live in a place so beautiful and so peaceful looking. This makes me appreciate my northerner home a whole lot more.

I have stood in the dusty street corners of Delhi, a city of 16 million people where I felt the density of population and the tragedy of poverty. I felt guilt, yet huge gratitude for being in a position where I could visit the streets of Delhi yet be able to leave it and return to a place that I can only describe as heavenly. We take for granted the beauty of the land and the creatures of the north.

We have a democratic and socially responsible political system in place here in Canada and we reap the benefits of many good things for our lives. We owe it to ourselves to make sure that we keep our heaven here in Canada alive and well by putting people in power who care about real democracy, sharing and nurturing our population while standing for peace and neighbourly relations with the rest of the world.

We are lucky we live in a place where everyone else wants to get to, let's not lose it.



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